



Brighton & Hove City Council

Prevention of victimisation toolkit Doorstep Crime

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1. Introduction.

For many years now Trading Standards, the Office of Fair Trading, the Police and other agencies have been trying to educate people not to engage with doorstep con men and rogue traders. These efforts have included poster and leaflet education campaigns, television and radio commercials, programs of talks to community group and the provision of door sticker reminders to name but a few. Whilst the success of these campaigns is difficult to quantify in terms of prevention, information collated by the Police in the South East indicate that incidents of this type of offence are still on the rise.

Doorstep selling is the practice of selling goods and services where the contract is concluded in the consumer's home or on the doorstep.

As a sales channel, doorstep selling covers a wide set of products ranging from household cleaning materials costing £1 or less to replacement double-glazing and other building work, costing many thousands of pounds. In 2004, the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) estimated that there were 16,000 cases reported to local authority Trading Standards Services (TSS) per year about rogue doorstep traders - though the overall figure could be much higher.

In the same report it was estimated that the overall value of those goods and services that have been sold through doorstep selling, is at least £2.4 billion.

Victims are likely to be older consumers living alone, especially women. In the present economic climate it is more likely than ever that consumers will be exposed to high-pressure selling techniques on the doorstep.

According to the OFT on average the victim of a rogue door step seller would lose approximately £2,500.

The appalling consequences of these offences can leave the victims stripped of their life savings or even in debt, with little or no work carried out in the best case, with dangerous work carried out or damage caused in the worst. Home office research shows that the majority of the victims of this type of offending are over 65 and are two and a half times more likely to be in care or die within two years as a result of victimisation.

We are taking a new approach at tackling this problem. We don't just want to give people information but we want to give people the skills to say no!

2. How the course materials are laid out.

The course materials are drawn together from various resources and laid out so that the trainer can be flexible in their approach and use the sections relevant to their group.

3. Tips on how to teach adult learners

Many of these points may seem obvious but are included to assist trainers of all levels of experience.

Teaching Summary Chart:

Section	Guidance	Suggested teaching practices	Equipment	Assessment
Introduction	<p>Explain why you are there and course objectives.</p> <p>Provide background information on doorstep calling.</p>	<p>Trainer leads this part of the session</p> <p>Ask questions about peoples experiences</p> <p>Ice breakers</p>		<p>Notes</p> <p>Audience participation</p>
Assertiveness- What is assertiveness?	<p>Ask people</p> <p>'What do we think assertiveness is?'</p>	<p>Open questions.</p> <p>Get people to give example of when they think they have been assertive non assertive or aggressive</p> <p>Write these on a white board/Flip chart so you can refer back to them</p>	White board/Flip chart	<p>Notes</p> <p>Audience participation</p>
Fear- Why might people be afraid when someone knocks at their door- Explore	<p>Ask people</p> <p>'How do we feel when an uninvited caller comes to the door?' followed up by</p> <p>'What do you imagine might happen?' or</p> <p>'Why are you afraid of this person?'</p>	<p>Open questions.</p> <p>Get people to give example of when they have been scared or when they think they would be scared and why?</p> <p>Write these on a white board/Flip chart so you can refer back to them</p>	White board/Flip chart	<p>Notes</p> <p>Audience participation</p>

How to say NO and mean it	What makes it difficult to say no?' - Discuss	Open questions Exercise 1	Exercise 1	Notes Audience participation Reflection Formal assessment
Broken record technique	Explain this technique	Exercise 2	Exercise 2	Notes Audience participation Reflection Formal assessment
Stopping engagement	Explain this technique	Describe Express Specify Consequences Exercise 3	Exercise 3	Notes Audience participation Reflection Formal assessment

The Pace of Learning

Trainers may need to allow for longer intervals between the sections of the course. It may be more convenient for the course to be run in sections building over a series of days or even weeks limiting each session to between 50 & 60 minutes. Each trainer will need to examine the needs of their own communities and decide which method would be most suitable. Remember that more time may be required for responding to questions and for group discussion.

Organising Learning

The course notes suggest the desired learning goals but trainers may wish to help learners to develop their own in addition to these. Outlines of the sessions are included but it is more important to bring together the relevance of the learners experience with the concepts described. It is therefore a good idea to build on examples based on the group's experiences. Encouraging further practice of the techniques described in a controlled environment could prove fun as well as reinforcing the concepts learned.

The Approach of the Trainer

Trainers need to remain positive, supportive and helpful. They should try to promote confidence in the learning process as well as self-discipline and self-respect in the learners. Try to maintain an environment of informality and fun where appropriate, working to make learners feel welcome and at ease. Trainers need to be sensitive to the value of social interactions among learners but be aware of stronger characters taking control of the group.

Trainers will need to be flexible to the differing needs, interests, and abilities within the group. It is hoped that strong community connections and knowledge will assist trainers in achieving this. Learners should be

encouraged to work together in groups where relevant to meet the set goals. Help learners to relate new knowledge to past experiences and consider the use of small group discussions to do this.

Hints and Tips

- Pay attention to the physical environment. Ensure that learners are comfortable and that any special needs are catered for. Prepare the environment and ensure that comfortable heating and proper ventilation exist.
- Be prepared to help learners move closer to sound sources and use extra voice and media amplification where necessary.
- Consider the possibility of failing vision and the problems that might arise as a result for some older learners. Ensure that the room is well lit but reduce glare, direct sunlight and potential distractions.
- Use methods and techniques that particularly emphasize visual and aural input. Use interactive techniques where relevant and use high contrast on visuals and handout material.
- Consider possible memory loss and the problems this may cause in taking on new information.
- Be sensitive to the manner of the presentation, read material aloud where possible and use combined auditory and visual methods of presentation.

4. Course material

Consider initially “who is the training for?” Discuss desired outcomes – more confidence, the tools to effectively say no.

Consider ice breaker activity such as getting participants to discuss who might have come to the door when they were younger and who they experience now.

1. What is assertiveness

Objective: -

- To introduce the audience to the concept of assertiveness
- To understand what assertiveness is and to dispel any myths around it

Consider approaching with guided questions e.g. ‘What do we think assertiveness is?’

Some of the problems with 'assertiveness' are around the term itself. Assertiveness is often equated with being loud or pushy but this is simply not the case. It might be best therefore to look at what assertiveness is NOT before looking at ways to be more assertive.

The aim of this training is not to teach people to be aggressive, loud, or bullying, it may however help people to stand up for themselves against those who are acting in that manner towards them. In essence assertiveness is not about trying to impose your will on others but to develop methods of clearly communicating your position and resisting people who seek to impose THEIR will on you.*

3 modes of behaviour have been identified:-

Non-assertive

The non assertive person gives everyone else their choice, they put everyone else first, even when it is to their own detriment. They allow themselves to be manipulated.

Aggressive

The aggressive person makes all the decisions: nobody else has a choice. They manipulate others.

*One of the first people to explore the principles of assertiveness was Manuel J Smith in his book 'When I say No, I feel guilty' which was first published in 1975. In his book Smith explores the idea that being assertive is mainly about clearly expressing oneself and not allowing others to manipulate you. In it he lays out a 10 point 'Bill of Assertiveness Rights'. These include such simple things as 'You have the right to change your mind' and 'You have the right to make mistakes - and be responsible for them'. These rights are based around the principle that people have 'The right to be the final judge of yourself, this is the prime assertive right which allows no one to manipulate you'. Or in this case 'I have the right to decide who I admit to my home and who I choose to do the work regardless of your attempts to manipulate me'.

Assertive

The assertive person can make decisions and allows others to do so as well, they accept that both parties have the right to an opinion and a choice. The assertive person makes decisions free from manipulation.

2. Fear

Objective:

- To examine why people may be afraid in these situations
- to look at how fear effects peoples lives and the decisions they make
- to relate this to the principles of assertiveness

Consider approaching with guided questions e.g. 'How do we feel when an uninvited caller comes to the door?' followed up by 'What do you imagine might happen?' or 'Why are you afraid of this person?'

When people become angry or afraid the adrenal glands, located just above the Kidneys kick in releasing adrenalin into the blood. One consequence of this is that the blood supply is automatically rerouted away from the brain and other organs and rerouted to the muscles, preparing for action, the so called fight or flight response. The net result is that people just don't think clearly or efficiently.

Despite this, fear is an essential warning mechanism and it would not be helpful if we were unable to recognise or react to situations which may place us in danger. However if it allowed to go on unchecked it can be a corrosive and damaging experience. The part of assertiveness training is to help people respond appropriately to these situations without being overwhelmed by fear.*

* This is summed up in the title of Susan Jeffers book 'Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway'. In it Jeffers discusses the idea that: 'Not only am I going to experience fear whenever I'm on unfamiliar territory, but so is everyone else.' And that this can be a liberating experience. She goes on to talk about the myths around fear e.g. that to think negatively is realistic and to think positively is unrealistic. She writes that 90% of the things we worry about never happen.

She also notes that 'The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out and do it.' And that 'Pushing through the fear is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness'.

3. How to say NO and mean it.

Objective:

- To explore the issues around saying no
- To provide simple techniques to assist in saying no effectively

'What makes it difficult to say no?' - Discuss

Saying no is an important component of learning to be assertive. It helps to develop boundaries, which can safeguard your time and energy. In some cases, saying no effectively may even help keep you safe from harm. Edmund Bourne, PhD, in his book, *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook*, has developed a way to effectively say no to both people who are close to you, and to those with whom you do not wish to have further contact. Repeat their request. Explain your reason for stating no and say no. If necessary, suggest an alternative that is acceptable to the two of you.

Simply saying "No" or "No thank you" is all that is needed. You may need to repeat "No" again. With these individuals you may not want to engage in any further conversation where you feel pressured to concede to their wishes. ⁽¹⁾

Body language forms a large part of our communication, your body needs to say no to! It is important to maintain steady eye contact when saying no, maintain height parity, if the trader is standing up, stand up as well. Shake your head no if it helps you.

Saying no and meaning it can be an example of being assertive without being rude. If you have made your decision then let the person know instead of stringing them along for what you know will be a let down to them. If you warn them early then this will give them time to make arrangements. Being firm and consistent avoids the risk of giving someone the opportunity to exploit what they may construe as weakness.

The key is to be clear about your refusal. There is no need to explain your decision as this could give a message that you are not convinced of your decision. It might seem as if you are trying to convince yourself or the other person that your decision is a good idea. If you are tentative or hesitant, it will sow the seed that you might change your decision, clarity will demonstrate that you are not open to manipulation.

Some people who find saying 'no' difficult are confusing rejection of a request with rejection of the person making the request. Saying 'no' doesn't mean you don't like the person, just that you're refusing their current request, and vice versa. Be honest, calm and polite, it will help you keep control, and avoid escalating the situation or alienating the other person. People are happier to accept an honest 'no', than be faced with indecision and a delayed refusal. ⁽²⁾

Remember: If you have been behaving passively for a long time, you might be tempted to move over into the aggressive mode of operating. This often happens after you've buried situations for so long that you turn into a powder keg. Just realize that learning to be assertive takes practice, and it's O.K. to make a few mistakes along the way. Despite what people tell you, you are human, so keep on trying these new skills. (3)

[Simple practical exercise 1 – see appendix 1.](#)

Broken record technique

When a record gets stuck it plays the same thing over and over again. So, in broken record all you have to do is to repeat yourself again and again and again, until the person gives in or concedes to your view.

Children are masters at broken record, but somehow during adolescence we lose the skill. Experience shows most people capitulate after you repeat yourself three times. Broken record is particularly useful when:

1. Dealing with those in authority, or when you feel that the other person has more expertise than you.
2. You think you are not getting what you are entitled to.
3. You are dealing with people brighter or more fluent than you.
4. The other person is likely to use put-downs, or attack you verbally

Because you just have to repeat yourself, broken record is really easy to use. (4)*

Example:

Caller - I was just passing and I noticed that you have some ridge tiles loose on the roof; I can just pop up there and sort that out.

You – No thank you, I do not deal with people who call at my door.

Caller – I can sort it out right now, you don't need to call anybody else.

You - Thank you for your offer but I do not deal with people who call at my door.

Caller – I can do it very cheap.

You – That's a very kind offer but I do not deal with people who call at my door.

Caller - You want to get that sorted out before it gets any worse.

You – I recognise that you are concerned for my wellbeing but I do not deal with people who call at my door etc.

[Discuss the emotional blackmail approach 'I'm going to lose my job if I don't get this work, I have a wife and children to support'. This approach exploits the passive model of behaviour.](#)

[Simple practical exercise 2 – see appendix 1.](#)

* Used with the permission of Management Pocketbooks Ltd

4. Stopping engagement.

Objective:

- To provide people attending with a straight forward means of breaking off an engagement.

When dealing with somebody who is using the high pressure sales technique of 'verbal torrent', the following technique might be useful:

- Describe. Describe the behaviour / situation as completely and objectively as possible. Just the facts! This could help you to stop the torrent and provide a bit of thinking space to allow you to take back control of the conversation.
- Express. Express your feelings and thoughts about the situation / behaviour. Try to phrase your statements using "I", and not "You". Beginning sentences with "You" often puts people on the defensive, which means they won't listen to you.
- Specify. Specify what behaviour / outcome you would prefer to happen.
- Consequences. Specify the consequences (both positive and negative).

Example:

Describe - "You are saying that there is a problem with"

Express - "I am grateful for your concern but I do not deal with people on the doorstep"

Specify – "I am now going to contact my regular builder / a builder from the Buy With Confidence list and I would like you to leave now."

Consequences - "If you do not leave I will contact the Police and / or Trading Standards." (1)*

Simple practical exercise 3 – see appendix 1

This technique could be reinforced by combining it with the Broken Record technique.

Recap session and Feedback

* Copyright DESC script developed by Sharon and Gordon Bower - Asserting Yourself: A Practical Guide for Positive Change updated edition © 1991 published by Perseus Books part of The Perseus Books Group.

Trainers Notes

Appendix 1

Exercise 1 & 2

Preventing the engagement; Saying NO

Purpose:

The purpose of the exercise is that the group has a chance to practice saying NO, giving a clear message by combining verbal and non verbal communication. The idea is to look for contradictory signals e.g. nodding the head indicating acceptance whilst saying no.

1. Ask the group to form two lines, A & B, facing each other so that everybody is facing a partner. Line A then says NO to the partner opposite in line B who responds with YES. Carry this on for a minute or so then reverse the roles.

Feedback:

- What feelings were generated by saying NO
- Was it difficult to link the verbal and non verbal messages?
- Did the participants find their responses becoming firmer as the exercise went on?

2. Ask the group to form a circle. Ask each member of the group to consider a reasonable request they could make of the person to their right. They then turn to that person and make the request. Their partner refuses the request in a firm but polite manner. By the end of the exercise everybody will have made a request and refuse one.

Exercises courtesy of S Holland & C Ward Assertiveness: A practical approach

Exercise 3

Stopping engagement

Purpose:

The purpose of this exercise is to allow the course participants to practise the skills required for stopping an engagement either by use of the DESC scripting technique or by effectively saying no.

This can either be done with the course participants working in pairs from the prepared scenario below, as a demonstration between the trainer and a particular participant or as a combination of the two depending on time and the group involved.

Scenario:

Home owner -

It is lunch time and you are at home preparing some lunch when the doorbell rings unexpectedly. Upon opening the door you see a man in his late 30's to early 40's, he is well spoken and dressed in smart casual clothes. Use the skills you have gained during the course to deal with the situation as you best see fit.

Trader-

"Oh hello, I'm glad you're in, I was just passing and I happened to notice that you have some tiles loose on your roof. Actually you're really lucky I was passing, I wasn't supposed to be here today, but you really need to get that sorted out right now or it could cost you a fortune if you leave it like that. It just so happens I've got the materials with me on the van I could just pop up and have a look if you like, won't cost very much, I could probably sort it out for about 50quid. Much better than leaving it to get worse - I'll just go get the ladders."

N.B. Whilst this scenario is based around a cold calling incident involving a roofer, it is intended as a guide only. Trainers should consider the trade sector or other situation most appropriate to their audience and adapt the scenario as required. The main objective is to get the participants to practise the techniques provided in the training.

Appendix 2

Crib sheet – Colour crib sheet suitable for copying and distribution available below.

Assertiveness crib sheet

Assertiveness training does *not* teach the student to be aggressive, loud, or bullying, although it may well help them to stand up to those who are. Assertiveness is not about trying to dominate others: it is a more a matter of resisting those who seek to dominate and manipulate you.

Remember body language is 90% of communication.

In broken record all you have to do is to repeat yourself again and again and again, until the person gives in or concedes to your view.

Example:

Caller - I was just passing and I noticed that you have some ridge tiles loose on the roof; I can just pop up there and sort that out.

You – No thank you, I do not deal with people who call at my door.

Caller – I can sort it out right now, you don't need to call anybody else.

You - Thank you for your offer but I do not deal with people who call at my door.

Caller – I can do it very cheap.

You – That's a very kind offer but I do not deal with people who call at my door.

Caller - You want to get that sorted out before it gets any worse.

You – I recognise that you are concerned for my wellbeing but I do not deal with people who call at my door.

DESC

- Describe. Describe the behaviour / situation as completely and objectively as possible. Just the facts! "You are saying that there is a problem with"
- Express. Express your feelings and thoughts about the situation / behaviour. Try to phrase your statements using "I", and not "You". Beginning sentences with "You" often puts people on the defensive, which means they won't listen to you. "I am grateful for your concern but I do not deal with people on the doorstep"
- Specify. Specify what behaviour / outcome you would prefer to happen. "I am now going to contact my regular builder / a builder from the Buy With Confidence list and I would like you to leave now."
- Consequences. Specify the consequences (both positive and negative). "If you do not leave I will contact the Police and / or Trading Standards."

Appendix 3

Source material

How to say No and mean it:-

- (1) & (3) Extract adapted from Positive Coping Skills Toolbox VA Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Centers (MIRECC)
- (2) Extract from 6 ways to say NO and mean it! Crown Copyright 2006
- (4) Extract adapted from The Assertiveness Pocketbook by Max A. Eggert © 1997 Max A. Eggert

Stopping engagement:-

- (1) DESC script developed by Sharon and Gordon Bower - Asserting Yourself: A Practical Guide for Positive Change © 1991

Preventing the engagement; Saying NO:-

- (1) Exercises courtesy of S Holland & C Ward Assertiveness: A practical approach

Other works referenced in text

When I Say No, I Feel Guilty - Manuel J Smith

Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway – Susan Jeffers

The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook - Edmund Bourne, PhD